DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 306 210 SP 031 104

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TITLE Equal Opportunity in the Classroom for All Children.
PUB DATE Mar 89
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (Orlando, FL, March 11-14, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Elementary Secondary Education; *Grouping (Instructional Purposes); Individual Differences; Performance Factors; *Self Esteem; *Social Bias; Socioeconomic Influences; Student Attitudes; *Teacher Expectations of Students

ABSTRACT

This paper presents an overview of the research and literature on teacher expectations, particularly that from the last ten years. This includes research on race, gender, and socioeconomic status. Also included are studies on non-verbal behaviors and grouping children according to perceived ability. It is pointed out that pupils respond to expectations of teachers, and their performance and self-esteem are influenced by the attitudes of teachers. While teachers are generally correct in their judgments of what each child needs, unconscious biases or treatment of particular children can lead to the self-fulfilling prophecy. Thirty-eight references are cited in the bibliography. (JD)

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Equal Opportunity in the Classroom for All Children

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A paper presented at ASCD National Conference
Orlando, Florida
March 11-14, 1989

SP031 104

Much research has been done on teacher expectations since the famous Pygmalion study by Rosenthal and Jacobson. This paper attempts to look at the research and literature on teacher expectations since that study, particularly what has been done in the last ten years. This includes research on race, gender, and socioeconomic status. We have also included studies on non-verbal behavior and reading groups because it is felt that these two areas are of vital importance to expectancies and self-esteem of students.

Early studies can be traced back to Levin and Hamel, but Tolman is considered to be the originator of expectancies theories of learning, presenting his ideas in a publication in 1932 (Dusek, 1985). What is of most interest to educators, however, started with Rosenthal when he began his dissertation research in the 1950's. Rosenthal decided to do a statistical analysis that was quite extraneous to the main purpose of his dissertation. The results of that analysis showed that somehow, something he did influenced the subjects and therefore increased the probability of verifying his hypothesis.

This started Rosenthal's search for an answer to a phenomenon he called "unconscious experimenter bias." His literature search took him back as far as 1885 with Ebbinghaus and his reference to the same phenomenon. This in turn led to the idea that several experimenters could produce a similar happening in their own laboratories and show that Rosenthal was not alone in having unintentionally affected the results of his research.

The first study was with psychology students and used photographs of peoples faces. This led to the idea of effects with animal subjects and hence the famous rat studies. Sixty laboratory rats were divided among 12 experimenters with half being told the animals were maze bright and half that they were maze dull. The results, of course, proved that animals thought to be better performers become better performers. The experimenters who had been led to believe their animals were bright viewed their rats as brighter, more pleasant, and more likable. It was also found that they handled their rats more and were more gentle than the other experimenters.

Another experiment used Skinner boxes and the results were the same. All five sections that had bright rats concluded the animals were superior to the other "inferior" rats. Because the "bright" rats were handled more, it was felt this might have contributed to the superior learning of the animals. Also reported was more intense observation and perhaps quicker reinforcement for proper responses.

After about a dozen experiments Rosenthal summarized the results in a paper for the American Scientist. In the paper he wondered whether the same effect might not also be found in other occupations including teaching. One request for a reprint of this paper came from Lenore F. Jacobson, the principal of an elementary school in California. She offered her school if Rosenthal ever graduated to using classroom children. What happened next is history. Pygmalion in the Classroom (Rosenthal

and Jacobson, 1968) was published and the idea of teacher expectations affecting student achievement was born. Rosenthal felt there was one unexpected finding in the study. He reported that when teachers were asked to describe the behavior of their students at the end of the year those children for whom intellectual growth was predicted were described as more interesting, curious, happy, better adjusted and affectionate. The children in the control group who also gained in intelligence, however, were described as less well-adjusted and less interesting. It was felt that children who were expected to grow intellectually benefited in other ways. In other words, if children show intellectual growth it is better for their vitality and mental health if the teacher is expecting them to do so.

Since the Pygmalion study more recent research has resulted in contradictory findings. Brophy and Good and Cooper and Good, in particular, have suggested ways that teachers influence learning for certain children. Recent research, however, cautions teachers to question any findings and to be better prepared to read and interpret research publications. There are many variables that must be considered when looking at expectations:

1. Students come to classes with certain aptitudes for learning and each differ in these aptitudes.
2. Students differ in ethnic background, gender, and socioeconomic status.

These all may be correlated and each can serve as sources of

teacher expectations or student expectations. Teachers also differ in many characteristics:

1. Personality - attitudes
2. Use of information regarding student achievement
3. Social skills and attitudes

Both teachers and students come to their first meeting with a host of habitual expectations and behavior patterns built up from prior expectancies (Dusek, 1985). Not only do teachers react to students because of these variables but students also act in particular ways, therefore causing teachers to react in an expected way.

It should be noted that there is wide disagreement among psychologists concerning teacher expectations. A basic question of the research concerns the nature of individual differences and how they should be treated. Research that says teachers are not trying hard enough to educate all students or are favoring certain students over others is less than convincing. Perhaps the appropriate question to ask at this time is not, "How are teachers teaching students of varying ability?" but rather "How should teachers vary their treatment of different ability groups?" Perhaps if we could answer that question we would have more direction in our schools (Dusek, 1985).

While past research focused on race and/or socioeconomic status, recent findings have dealt with gender and non-verbal behavior. Also subjects such as reading, which uses grouping as a teaching strategy, have been studied for expectancies. The

attached bibliography provides an update of the most recent research in these areas including grouping for reading.

Research has taught us that what a child brings with him/her to school via experiences is quite essential in building further knowledge. We also know that learning is a continued process of what we have already experienced or learned. Because these experiences vary from child to child, it is necessary for classroom teachers to treat each child as an individual. Why then, do educators continue to "group" children for anything that they possibly can?

Webster defines "group" as: two or more figures forming a complete unit in a composition; a number of individuals assembled together or having common interests; classify. In education, we not only classify children in groups, but we also through this classification assemble together a number of individual children WITHOUT common interests and treat the "group" as one. We group especially for reading, with usually three levels: low, middle, high. No matter what we call the groups the children know who is low, who is middle, and who is high. Therefore, "labeling" occurs.

Why do teachers group? Children are grouped because it seems convenient, and sometimes more efficient. It further seems to be the logical way to teach a large number of children. When "grouping" is utilized, we can not significantly address individual needs of the students. Whatever the reason, it is not especially important. But if we can agree that children are

truly individuals then we do have alternatives to "grouping."

The practice of assigning students to ability-based instructional groups within classrooms is almost as common at the secondary level with tracking, as it is at the elementary level. Use of ability grouping for reading instruction occurs in about 80 percent (or higher) of all classrooms in this country.

Research has shown that often times, grouping occurs because of information based on social rather than academic information. In Rist's (1970) investigation of reading instruction received by a group of black children during kindergarten, first, and second grades, there was an absence of test information, therefore, the kindergarten teacher made decisions for grouping from her own "IDEAL TYPE" characterization of fast learners. Children were assigned to the high ability group if they "appeared clean and interested, sought interactions, spoke with less dialect, displayed leadership within the class, were at ease with adults, and came from homes which displayed various status criteria valued in the middle class." Children who did not meet these standards were placed in low ability groups during instruction. Not only were these assignments for kindergarten but it is alarming to note that the children remained in the same groups in first as well as second grade. Thus "groups" appear to be relatively permanent entities with little regard to individual progress.

One crucial mechanism to examine in the process of grouping is that students tend to remain in the groups to which they are

initially assigned. It is therefore mandatory that these assignments be accurate. Can this be done within the first few weeks of first grade, or kindergarten? It is highly unlikely that accurate assessments of students' aptitudes can be made so quickly. It is also known that some teachers place children in low ability groups because of behavior or attention problems and not necessarily because of low reading achievement.

Several studies suggest that teachers have lower expectations of academic and social success for lower class children than they do for middle and upper class children and that the proportion of time allocated to "meaning-type" tasks differ greatly for high and low ability readers. It may be safe to say that about one-fourth of the instructional time is devoted to meaning-related activities for low ability groups, as compared to about one-half of the instructional time allocated to meaning-related activities for high ability groups. In other words, there is a trend for high-ability groups to be engaged in more contextual reading than children in low-ability groups. A further review of the research found that children in high-ability groups read silently much more than they read orally, while children in low-ability groups read orally much more frequently than silently. Since silent reading is usually somewhat faster, it follows that children consequently, will read more if their predominant mode is silent reading.

In oral reading, which seems to be more repetitive, children seem to reread text materials more frequently, which

other members of their group may have already covered. In contrast, when children in high-ability groups read aloud, each child reads new material. Research shows that low groups are more task oriented and do less reading than high groups. Reading lessons for low groups are more teacher centered, more tightly monitored, and more likely to require literal interpretations of text rather than developing critical thinking and making reading meaningful. Research also shows that high achievers (those in high level groups) receive more response opportunities or are given more time to respond to questions. Teachers tend to give more clues or re-phrase questions more frequently than with low achievers.

Several researchers have found that teachers interrupt students in lower ability groups during oral reading between two and five times more frequently than they do students in higher ability groups. Students in low groups are given less time to correct themselves, and the teacher is more likely to pronounce any difficult word to keep the lesson moving. The constant interruptions are contributing factors to general hesitancy of low-ability students during oral reading. Their appeals for teacher assistance, and their own inability to monitor their reading proficiency is further evidence of a negative effect of teacher interruptions.

What goes on in reading groups differs in reading competence as much as there are differences in instruction and variations in individual aptitudes. In summary, teacher interruption

behaviors, the amount of reading during reading lessons, the difficulty of reading materials used, and the content of the reading lessons are all contributing factors for failures to achieve positive results for which grouping is intended.

When children are placed in low-ability groups because of behavioral or attention problems, teachers spend more time on managerial tasks. Since time spent on the management of behavior has been found to be negatively correlated with learning (Brophy, 1979), this finding suggests that low-ability students may have fewer opportunities to receive reading instruction. One criteria which is likely to be affected by the ability level of other group members is that of attentiveness. If a student has difficulty reading, it stands to reason that maintaining interest in the material and following story line is next to impossible. Therefore, we get an extension of inattentive behavior in the rest of the group, which causes the teacher to also become temporarily distracted so as to regain the attention of the group. If management occurs frequently, these interruptions are most likely to weaken the overall quality of the lesson by making it less coherent and more difficult to follow as well as to comprehend. Research continues to show that bright students perform better in ability groups, producing a positive effect, and slower students performance is exhibited by a negative effect in ability grouping.

It is interesting to note that even in institutions of higher learning, college students have pre-conceived notions

about student expectancy and achievement. Feldman (1972) found that some college students rated lower socioeconomic groups higher than other groups on the likelihood of being illiterate and coarse, and at the same time rated middle and upper socioeconomic classes as more likely to be striving, complex, independent, creative, far-sighted, persistent, and intelligent. Thus it may follow that teachers appear to apply similar stereotypical characteristics to lower class children and expect less from them during lessons. Just how these expectations become real in the classroom could be explained as Good (1981) showed: (1) teachers expect different specific behaviors and achievement from particular students; (2) because of these different expectations they behave differently toward various students; (3) in turn, this different treatment sends different messages to students which affects their achievement, motivation, and self-concept; (4) over time, teacher actions shape students' behavior and teachers' initial expectations are met.

Another consideration of interaction related to ability groups is the information that teachers convey about reading group status in general class settings. Weinstein (1976) reported that classes were frequently told to watch assignment instructions for the high-ability reading group because some day they would also be able to do that work. One of the teachers in Weinstein's sample said to the class, "Joey's group has all of this to do because they are very smart and this is more difficult."

Teachers do make the difference in what happens from one classroom to another. A critical component of teachers' thinking involves their expectations about individuals and groups. Some evidence suggests that expectations enter into teachers' decisions about reading groups at various stages. Teachers' expectations about individual children influence the reading groups into which children are placed. Once children have been placed in groups, teachers often generalize expectations to all members of a group even when teachers know that a child's placement has been at best a "risky" decision.

Reading group membership seems to affect children's perceptions of one another as well as perceptions of themselves. They all know to which group they belong, regardless of what they are called. A frequent finding in the sociometric research has been a strong relationship between social status and reading group membership. Hamilton (1983) found that when students were assigned to homogeneous ability groups for reading instruction based primarily on reading achievement scores, to a degree, they were assigned according to social class. Therefore, if teachers rely only on test scores for placement, as is the case much of the time, they are also "rank-ordering" according to social class. Advantaged students are socialized for responsibility while disadvantaged students (low-ability) tend to be socialized for subordination. It has been found that both black and white middle-class schools rewarded "nice" behavior and self control

and encouraged student interaction during social and academic activities. In lower class schools, (low-ability), proper behavior meant submission to authority. Student interaction of any type was discouraged.

Research has demonstrated that the common practice of ability grouping should be questioned. By grouping children homogeneously, we are only compounding initial learning problems by placing those children who have learning problems in the same groups. If we must group, perhaps heterogeneous grouping might be an alternative. Another suggestion would be more reliance on "guided individualization." Although this may seem to be more time consuming it may prove to be a more efficient means of instruction, especially for slower paced students. Either of these alternatives would be a considerable improvement to the current practice of ability grouping which is least effective for the very students who are most in need of a positive learning environment.

Another area of recent study has been nonverbal cues from teachers. Factors that influence teachers' reactions to certain children include the context of the interaction, the time of year, the teacher's attribution about the reasons for a student's action and teacher goals. An earlier study by Brophy showed that teachers are more likely to respond with positive nonverbals when students act in a similar way toward them.

Young students (especially girls) are able to pick up nonverbal cues from a teacher. They report that they feel more

liked by a teacher when he/she leans forward, smiles, and nods affirmatively. Other students mentioned nonverbal behavior and indirect feedback in about 10% of the statements describing how they received information about their intelligence and performance.

Research on teacher expectancies for male and female students has been known for a number of years. Jokes about verbal vs. math skills abound and it is only fairly recently that teachers have been urging girls as well as boys to continue with math and science courses at the high school level. Numerous studies have been done regarding sex differences and "at this point there is no evidence that the differences in math and science have a genetic or biological basis." Evidence does exist, however, that shows that different treatment of groups of students and different expectations about math and science achievement can and do have an impact on achievement (Campbell, 1986, p. 517). For example, it has been shown that secondary math teachers give boys more attention and a different type of feedback. Boys are urged to try harder while girls are praised simply for trying.

Somewhere during their junior high school experience, girls come to feel that they are expected to do less well in math. This decreased confidence in math skills as well as decreased expectations for success were found to precede, rather than follow, a decline in math achievement by females. It is interesting to note that no other group starts out ahead in

school in reading, writing and even math--and 12 years later finds itself behind.

Do teachers really behave differently toward boys and girls? Research seems to indicate this. We know that most elementary teachers prefer students with good self control, who are generally easy to manage and who follow classroom rules. Girls fit this description, but boys still manage to capture more teacher attention. Boys actually demand more attention. They are more likely to call out answers and be accepted by the teacher. When girls call out, teachers reprimand and tell them to raise their hands. Boys are trained to be assertive while girls are taught to be passive spectators in the classroom (Sadker & Sadker, 1986).

Research also shows that minority children are treated differently in the classroom. The school is a microcosm of society. Therefore, the racial and sex-role stereotypes and biases prevalent in society find their way into the school. (Scott-Jones & Clark, 1986). Society values males over females, and whites over non-whites, and this is reflected in the school environment.

Black females in particular find discrimination in the classroom; white students are praised more and white girls are given more responsibility in the classroom. Black girls tend to avoid the teacher and approach only when necessary. Even black female teachers tend to reinforce males of both races more frequently than girls of either race.

Some years ago a program was developed and tested in California which dealt with discrimination in the classroom. Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement (TESA) began as a model for desegregation but later aimed at differential treatment of high and low achievers. Today another program has been developed called GESA (Gender Expectations and Student Achievement). Making teachers aware of their behavior toward all children is the major thrust of both programs.

Because so many elements influence a teacher's behavior, research finds it difficult, if not impossible, to pin point cause and effect. We know that besides gender, social class and race are important sources of information and relate to teacher expectations. This is because a student's race and social class is directly observable and, along with gender, make up a teacher's first impression. It is also common to make "group" generalizations or generalized expectations for certain groups of people.

It is extremely important for teachers and prospective teachers to be aware of the research regarding teacher expectations. While teachers are generally correct in their judgments of what each child needs, unconscious biases or treatment of particular children can lead to the self-fulfilling prophecy. Research on teacher expectations is very complicated and many factors must be considered. If teachers are made aware of the research and their own behaviors, hopefully, all children will benefit. Treating all children equally (as human beings) is

a first step. Only when teachers see beyond gender, race and socioeconomic factors can they decide what is best for each child and each ability level. Further research is needed in the area of teacher expectancies. Also needed are better teacher preparation programs that help teachers to believe that they can teach all students.

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